

## Message Text

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12

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1038

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 2961

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OTRA, PINT, SA

SUBJECT: SAUDI VISA POLICY

REF: STATE 92779

1. THE MOST RECENT DEFINITIVE RESTATEMENT OF SAUDI VISA POLICY AS REGARDS JEWS WAS GIVEN BY KING FAISAL SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION BY A JEWISH MEMBER OF A US CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION AS TO WHY SAUDI ARABIA DID NOT GIVE VISAS TO JEWS, THE KING REPLIED: "WE HAVE OBSERVED THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF JEWS, PARTICULARLY AMERICAN JEWS, SUPPORT ZIONISM AND ISRAEL. THEY HAVE NO BUSINESS IN SAUDI ARABIA." THIS REMAINS THE OFFICIAL SAUDI VISA POLICY. THE FACT THAT A PERSON IS JEWISH IS TO BE CONSIDERED PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE THAT HE SUPPORTS INTERESTS HOSTILE TO SAUDI ARABIA AND IS THEREFORE INELIGIBLE FOR A VISA.

2. INCREASINGLY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, HOWEVER, THE PRACTICE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY MORE FLEXIBLE THAN THE POLICY. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN ABLE TO GET A VISA FOR EVERY RPT EVERY AMERICAN WHO IS JEWISH ON WHOSE BEHALF IT HAS APPROACHED THE SAG. IN SOME CASES THIS HAS INVOLVED VERY LITTLE EFFORT ON OUR PART. AT THE OTHER EXTREME, IN A RECENT CASE OF A JOURNALIST WHO IS JEWISH, A LONG-TIME AND STRONG SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL AND CRITIC OF THE ARABS-- WHICH MAKES HIM INEL-  
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IGIBLE FOR A VISA REGARDLESS OF WHETHER HE IS JEWISH --

WE EXPENDED A VERY GREAT DEAL OF HIGH LEVEL EFFORT  
INDEED AND USED UP CONSIDERABLE CREDIT WITH THE SAUDIS.

3. THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN WHETHER A VISA IS ULTIMATELY GRANTED IS WHETHER THE SAUDIS SEE -- OR CAN BE MADE TO SEE -- THAT IT IS IN THEIR OWN INTEREST TO GIVE IT. THE CASE OF KMS INDUSTRIES CITED BY YAMANI IN HIS FACE THE NATION INTERVIEW (REFTEL) INVOLVES A COMMERCIAL ENDEAVOR OF INTEREST TO THE SAG. WE SUSPECT THAT A NUMBER OF OTHER JEWISH BUSINESSMEN VISIT SAUDI ARABIA WITHOUT OUR ASSISTANCE OR KNOWLEDGE. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WELL-CONNECTED SAUDI BUSINESSMEN WHO WOULD HAVE LITTLE TROUBLE ARRANGING A VISA FOR A JEWISH BUSINESSMAN IF HE WERE KNOWN AND TRUSTED BY THEM.

4. WE ANTICIPATE FURTHER AND ACCELERATED SOFTENING OF SAUDI VISA PRACTICE. WE ARE LESS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT CHANGE IN OFFICIAL VISA POLICY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IN THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE FAISAL'S PRE-OCCUPATION WITH THE COMMUNIST-ZIONIST MENACE HAD GROWN TO A FIXATION. THE NEW LEADERS OF THE COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY PRINCE FAHD, HAVE STRONG BELIEFS ABOUT ISRAEL AND ZIONISM BUT THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO LET THESE CONVICTIONS DICTATE THEIR ACTIONS IN ALL AREAS. THEY WILL NOT BE INCLINED TO LOOK FOR A ZIONIST THREAT WHERE NONE IS MANIFEST.

5. THOUGH IT IS SELF EVIDENT, WE REITERATE FOR THE RECORD THAT PRESSURE FROM FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, PARTICULARLY IF IT IS PUBLIC, WILL NOT BE AN EFFICACIOUS WAY OF INDUCING THE SAG TO MODERATE ITS VISA POLICIES. HOWEVER, CONTINUED GENTLE PRODDING BY THE AMBASSADOR AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY AT APPROPRIATE OCCASIONS CAN HELP TO SPEED THE CHANGE WHICH IS TAKING PLACE BECAUSE THE SAG SEES IT TO BE IN ITS OWN INTEREST.

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